



ERIC WHITACRE'S VIRTUAL SCHOOL

CHAPTER 6: THE PRIMER

Teaching your audience the rules of your world

Student Guide – Curiosity Edition



Introduction

This video will help you gain some insight into Eric's approach for creating the beginning of a song or musical composition. You will explore even more ideas that may help you listen to all music more insightfully, including the concept of "musical form."

In this chapter, Eric presents ideas and concepts for beginning a piece and explains that he usually does not write a work's

opening section until toward the end of the process. In this way he can establish the Golden Brick themes and gestures in depth through the full work. By composing the beginning last he is able to create a coherent opening to introduce those elements to the listener.

Two contrasting works are used to demonstrate this concept, *A Boy and a Girl*, at 4.5 minutes, and *Deep Field*, at more than 20 minutes. This will allow the students to discover how the difference in scale shapes the openings of both works.

Works referenced in this video:

- *A Boy and a Girl* – https://youtu.be/j_AMI0vRqF8
- *Deep Field* – <https://youtu.be/yDiD8F9ItX0>

Words and ideas to help you stay curious

A Boy and a Girl

Deep Field

Patterns of three

Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951)

A “Phrase” in music as described by Arnold Schönberg

Musical Form

Listening Map

Discussion, Discovery and Insight

When you are watching a new video, how important is it for you that the video creates interest and keeps you watching in the first few moments? Are you a person that will get bored and turn it off almost immediately, or will you keep watching to see if it gets better? Why is this important?

It has been said that “you never get a second chance to make a first impression.” What do you think this means? Do you think this is true, and do you pay special attention when you are meeting a new person for the first time?

Have you ever listened to music with the intention of picking out the sections of the musical form? Is the idea of “form” a new concept for you?

Creating an opening

1. Listen to a song you know well. Can you hear how the song is divided up into sections such as a verse and a chorus? This is the “form” of the song. Can you hear when these sections repeat or when they are heard for the first time in the song? Make a “listening map” representing the sections by creating symbols or images on a piece of paper. Be creative and select images you think connect to the song in some way.
2. Have someone listen to the same song as they look at your listening map of the musical form. Can they follow your listening map? Do they agree with your depiction of the musical form? Change your map if you discover mistakes, or if you think it would be improved some other way.
3. Using the same song, write a spoken introduction for the song that could be used to prepare the listener for what they will hear. Let the introduction be a “preview” that helps the listener hear the song better on a first hearing.

Reflection and Insights

Did you find it easy to hear musical form in music? Why, or why not, in your opinion? Describe your thinking. What might you do to hear form better?

What makes a song interesting? How does musical form affect this opinion? Does the first section of a new song need to hold your attention, or will you listen to the whole song before you decide if you like it?

Would you change this activity to better suit your learning style and interests? If so, describe how you would change it and why the adjustments would be better for you.
